

## Newsletter Articles

### Introduction and Index

This section of the RAB Documents Page contains 16 articles by RAB citizen members, also known as community members, that were published in Army and Presidio Trust environmental cleanup newsletters between 1996 and 2003.

The history of the Presidio RAB is recounted in the Presidio of San Francisco Restoration Advisory Board Final Report, which can be found at this link: [Final Report](#). The purpose of the RAB was to provide community advice and a forum for public discussion of the environmental remediation of the Presidio, a former Army base that became a national park in 1994.

Our RAB was formed in 1994, and in 2014 we voluntarily disbanded because the cleanup of petroleum contamination, hazardous substances and lead-based paint in soil was essentially complete. The remediation was begun by the Army in the 1980s and finished by the Presidio Trust between 1999 and 2014.

In 1995, the Army began publishing a newsletter on the cleanup efforts, entitled Presidio of San Francisco Environmental Newsletter. The following year, members of the RAB's Outreach Committee developed the idea of having a regular column by RAB community members in the newsletters. The Army's remediation public affairs staff supported the idea and the RAB reports began in May 1996. After the Presidio Trust took over the remediation responsibility in 1999, it maintained the newsletter under the title of Presidio CleanUp News, and we continued the reports until the Trust ceased publishing the cleanup newsletter as a separate entity in 2003.

The reports usually contained one or two articles about RAB activities, projects we were studying, or our independent research. Individual RAB community members took turns writing the articles, and we circulated them internally for review before submitting them to the newsletters. The aim was to provide scientific or historical background about the cleanup sites that might be of interest to the public, give updates on RAB activities, and illustrate citizen participation.

The newsletter articles by RAB community members are as follows:

1. "El Polin Spring" by Julia Cheever and Mark Youngkin, Presidio of San Francisco Environmental Newsletter, published by Department of the Army, Vol. 5, May 1996, page 3.
2. "Lead Contamination at the Presidio of San Francisco" by Doug Kern, Presidio of San Francisco Environmental Newsletter, published by Department of the Army, Vol. 6, July 1996, page 3.
3. "Crissy Field May Point Way to Presidio Cleanup" by Molly Hooper, Presidio of San Francisco Environmental Newsletter, published by Department of the Army, Vol. 7, September 1996, page 2.

Presidio of San Francisco Restoration Advisory Board (RAB) Archive  
RAB Documents Page  
Newsletter Articles by RAB Community Members

4. "Petroleum Contamination at the Presidio" by Harold Ball, Presidio of San Francisco Environmental Newsletter, published by Department of the Army, Vol. 8, November 1996, page 3.
5. "A Look Back, A Look Ahead: A Community RAB Member's Perspective on 1996" by Doug Kern, Presidio of San Francisco Environmental Newsletter, published by Department of the Army, Vol. 9, January 1997, page 3.
6. "Presidio Landfills" by Doug Kern, Presidio of San Francisco Environmental Newsletter, published by Department of the Army, Vol. 10, March 1997, page 3.
7. "The Presidio's Nike Missile Site" by Julia Cheever, Presidio of San Francisco Environmental Newsletter, published by Department of the Army, Vol. 11, June 1997, page 3.
8. "A RAB Review of 1997" by Julia Cheever, Presidio of San Francisco Environmental Newsletter, published by Department of the Army, Vol. 12, January 1998, page 4.
9. "RAB Report: Update on Community Member Activities" by Julia Cheever, Presidio of San Francisco Environmental Newsletter, published by Department of the Army, Vol. 13, July 1998, page 3.
10. "RAB Article: Presidio Riparian Corridor Restoration" by Doug Kern, Presidio of San Francisco Environmental Newsletter, published by Department of the Army, Vol. 14, November 1998, page 5.
11. "Building 637 Petroleum Contamination Cleanup" by Doug Kern and "RAB Update" by Julia Cheever, Presidio CleanUp News, published by Presidio Trust, Winter 2000, pages 1, 3 and 4.
12. "RAB Report: RAB Update" by Julia Cheever and "2001: A Restoration Advisory Board Odyssey" by Doug Kern, Presidio CleanUp News, published by Presidio Trust, Summer 2001, pages 2 and 3.
13. "RAB Report: RAB Update" by Julia Cheever and "A Glance at the Cliffs of Baker Beach" by Tracy Wright, Presidio CleanUp News, published by Presidio Trust, Winter 2002, pages 2a and 2b.
14. "RAB Close-Up: Mountain Lake" by Gloria Yaros, Presidio CleanUp News, published by Presidio Trust, Summer 2002, page 2a.
15. "RAB Report: Presidio Cleanup Outlook Spring 2003" by Doug Kern, Presidio CleanUp News, published by Presidio Trust within Presidio Post newsletter, Vol. 6, No. 3, March 2003, page 4.
16. "RAB Report: Working Groups Continue in 2003" by Restoration Advisory Board Community Members, Presidio CleanUp News, published by Presidio Trust within Presidio Post newsletter, Vol. 6, No. 5, June/July 2003, page 4.

## EL POLIN SPRING

By Julia Cheever and Mark Youngkin  
Restoration Advisory Board Community Members

**El Polin Spring** – an area of the Presidio northwest of Julius Kahn Playground that is now being assessed as part of the Army's basewide investigation of environmental pollution – touches on many strands of the Presidio's history. The spring, or more accurately a group of springs at the head of a valley, was once a major contributor of fresh water to a coastal marsh in the Crissy Field area that provided food and reeds to the native Ohlone people. The same series of springs was the main water supply of the Presidio in its first century as a military base, from the Spanish and Mexican periods through the first two or three decades of the American era.

Leo Barker, an archaeological historian with the National Park Service, says that in the 1820s and 1830s, El Polin Spring was the site of a very small outlying community of settlers from the Mexican Presidio. There are reports of two houses there, one made of adobe and the other a timber dwelling that according to one story was built by Russian sailors for Juana Briones, a colorful character who married a Presidio cavalryman in 1820 and later provided visiting sea captains with vegetables and milk from a farm outside the Presidio.

After the United States took over the Presidio in 1847, Army engineers constructed a reservoir to collect the spring water and according to old maps, built what was either a wood pipeline or a ditch to carry the water down to the post. In the 1870s, as the number of soldiers on the Presidio increased, the Army turned to the much larger Lobos Creek as the water supply. The flow of water at El Polin and other springs throughout the Presidio diminished drastically in the late 1800s and 1900s as a result of development and an extensive network of storm drains.

The field encircled by the El Polin Loop road eventually became a picnic area, with a small spring that is now called El Polin Spring at the southwest edge of the loop. Leo Barker thinks the cobblestone conduits and the cistern in the center of the picnic ground were probably completed in the early 1940s.

The landscape has also changed dramatically. Pete Holloran, the conservation chair of the Yerba Buena branch of the California Native Plant Society, says that the El Polin area, like much of the rest of the Presidio, was originally mostly grassland, with small woodlands of live oaks and willows shading the springs. In the 1830s and 1840s, however, the trees around the springs were cut down to provide fuel for the garrison. A photograph of the El Polin valley in 1870 shows a full reservoir surrounded by treeless fields.



The transformation continued when Major William A. Jones created the Presidio forest by planting tens of thousands of eucalyptus, cypress and pine trees throughout the base beginning in 1883. These trees and underbrush such as blackberry bushes and English ivy now cover much of the valley above the picnic ground.

Sometime after the turn of the century, the Army established a dump area, now known as Landfill 2, above the picnic ground that was apparently used until the 1970s. As the landfill grew down the valley, it buried part of the former reservoir. Now covered with vegetation and trees, the landfill is about 400 feet long, 200 feet wide and of varying depths ranging up to 20 feet. The lower part of it lies over a layer of silt and clay. In the winter, water flows through the landfill, creating a stream at the toe. To the west of the landfill is a grassland field that contains one of only two known stands of the Presidio clarkia, an endangered flower.

Landfill 2 was tested as part of the Army's base-wide Remedial Investigation of possible soil and ground water contamination, although the Army's contractor did not bring well-drilling rigs to the lower section of the landfill because of Park Service concerns about the sensitive grassland habitat nearby. Dames & Moore, the contractor that carried out the investigation, reported that there is no historical documentation of the contents of the landfill, but materials found there include glassware, charred wood ash, possible hospital debris, bottles and general building materials such as concrete,

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brick, slate piping and metal roofing materials.

The investigation found DDT, some metals, phenanthrene and petroleum hydrocarbons in the soil of the landfill. Volatile organic compounds and some metals were identified in the ground water. The finding of greatest concern was the DDT in the surface soil, which the report classified as a "moderate risk" to plants and certain birds. Because of this risk, the Army's current draft of the Feasibility Study, which is the next step in clean-up planning, recommends removing the contaminated soil to a depth of three feet. The Feasibility Study also recommends continued monitoring of the ground water. The final decision on remediation measures will be made in another document, the Army's Record of Decision, later this year.

Last winter, Mark Youngkin, a geologist and member of the Restoration Advisory Board, walked through the area as part of his review of the Remedial Investigation and became concerned as he noted a small wetland at the toe of the landfill, water running out of the base of the landfill and additional exposed debris. RAB members Jan Baxter, Scott Miller and LeeAnn Lahren, and Michael Work of the U.S. EPA, joined him in a second walk on February 25th. The community members reported at the March 12th board meeting that they believed further investigation was needed, especially in view of the numerous footpaths winding through the area and the closeness of Julius Kahn Playground. John Buck of the Army Environmental Center responded by visiting the area with Youngkin the next day, and in early April both the Army and the state Department of Toxic Substances Control took additional water samples.

At press time for this newsletter, the results of the new testing were not yet known. Thus, the most recent chapter of the story of El Polin Spring is unfinished. ■

*The views expressed in this article represent those held by the authors, and do not necessarily represent points of view held by the Army.*



## LEAD CONTAMINATION AT THE PRESIDIO OF SAN FRANCISCO

By Doug Kern

### **Why should the community be concerned about lead contamination?**

Lead is a toxic metal poisonous to people, animals, and plants. Lead poisoning can cause brain damage and neurological impairment. Infants and fetuses are particularly susceptible. Even very low levels of exposure can cause nervous system damage, learning disabilities, shorter stature, impaired hearing, and impaired function to blood cells. Lead is carried in the blood and with prolonged exposure stored in the bones. The stored lead slowly leaches back into the bloodstream resulting in chronic poisoning. At its worst, lead poisoning results in stupor, coma, kidney damage, or severe brain damage, according to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's 1989 report on Lead in School Drinking Water.

It is a troubling fact that lead is now widely distributed in the environment.

### **What are the sources of lead contamination and how are we exposed?**

Lead was formerly used in gasoline, paint, building materials, lubricants, water pipes and plumbing fixtures. Lead from automobile exhaust polluted soil, water and air along roadsides. Lead bullets contaminate the soil at firing ranges. Sandblasting and weathering of lead-based paint from buildings, bridges and other structures produces paint chips and dust spread by wind and rain. Water percolates through contaminated soil dissolving small amounts of lead into the groundwater. Similarly, lead contaminates drinking water by leaching from lead pipes and plumbing fixtures.

We take in lead by breathing dust and fumes, eating previously exposed food, drinking polluted water and absorbing it through the skin. Children are known to eat paint chips and soil directly.

### **What is Sol Levine's legacy on the lead issue at the Presidio?**

Sol Levine, a charter member of the Restoration Advisory Board, a lead inspector and a member of the National Lead Abatement Council, passed away in December 1995. As a grandfather, Sol was an outspoken and active Board member who cared deeply about lead contamination in children. He pursued the lead hazard issue wherever and whenever people would listen. Sol knew that lead-based paint on the exteriors of buildings weathers and deteriorates. The contaminated paint chips and dust end up along side of buildings in the "dripline." When Sol raised the possibility of lead contamination along the driplines of residences at the Presidio in the early summer of 1995, the Army and community listened. Much to the Army's credit, funding was quickly identified and soil samples were collected and analyzed for lead. The lead investigation sampled 479 residential buildings and 22 playgrounds. Soil around approximately 145 buildings contained lead levels in bare soil high enough to be of concern.

### **Where else could lead contamination occur at the Presidio?**

Potential sites include most buildings, roadways, landfills, areas where vehicles were fueled, maintained and painted, firing ranges and sandblasting areas. The soil and sediment around the Golden Gate Bridge contains high lead residues from years of sandblasting lead-based paint. Community members have been working with the Golden Gate Bridge District in their lead contamination clean-up efforts.

### **What is the controversy on lead contamination at non-residential buildings?**

Lead-based paint released from any structure creates a potential health hazard. Yet several hundred non-residential structures on the Presidio remain unsampled for lead in soil because Department of Defense policy limits sampling to residential buildings, playgrounds and daycare centers. Efforts to include non-residential structures have resulted in debate among the Army, the Park Service, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the California Department of Toxic Substances

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Control over the extent of the Army's clean-up responsibilities. Despite the conflict, Army and National Park Service representatives have submitted proposals for sampling lead in soil around certain non-residential structures because the Presidio is a national park. These proposals are the subject of continuing negotiations between the Army and the Park Service. Regulators and community members are commenting on revised proposals as they are submitted.

### **Conclusions**

Lead in the environment is a critical community issue. Lead is widely distributed and sometimes heavily concentrated. Exposure to lead produces known and serious adverse effects on human health and the ecological systems. The cleanup of lead on the Presidio is an important test case for how this issue will be handled on a national basis. We'll keep you informed with the details as they become available. That's how Sol Levine would have wanted it.

Additional information about lead contamination can be obtained from the California Lead Information Line at (510) 450-2424, the National Lead Information Center at 1-800-532-3394 and the EPA Safe Drinking Water Hotline at 1-800-426-4791. ■

*Doug Kern is a community member of the Presidio Restoration Advisory Board.*



## CRISSY FIELD MAY POINT WAY TO PRESIDIO CLEAN-UP

By Molly Hooper

Regulators seeking consensus on clean-up standards for the Presidio are learning it's easier to fit a complicated puzzle together by starting at one corner.

After months of struggling with environmental standards, a small working group is close to an agreement for clean-up standards for a small section of the Crissy Field Planning Area that may set the tone for other parts of the Presidio.

Contractors for the National Park Service this summer demolished more than a dozen structures in the northwest corner of the Planning Area adjacent to the St. Francis Yacht Club — an area which has been used primarily for vehicular maintenance, fuel and pesticide storage.

The clearing of the five-acre Directorate of Engineering and Housing Study Area (DEH) reflects plans to convert the Crissy Field area, a 100-acre waterfront section of the Presidio, for increased public use and recreation, including restoration of a wetland, dunes area and historic airfield. National Park Service officials say construction work might start as early as 1998, but it is understood that clean-up must come first.

While this corner section of the Crissy Field plan is only a fragment of the larger planning area, it has gained increased significance among regulators who hope that agreement on cleanup issues at DEH will speed consensus on some of the more thorny issues at the rest of the Presidio.

Among the contaminants identified at the DEH were: lead, pesticides, and TCE — an industrial solvent. Contaminants were found at five building sites; three included groundwater contamination.

For months state and federal regulators have been trying to reach agreement with the Army on what levels of contamination may be left in place at the Presidio while still being protective of groundwater, human health and ecology. The DEH working group, including the Base Cleanup Team (BCT) and members of the public, represents a "fast-track" effort to resolve the regulatory issues and to complete a required evaluation of alternatives for selection of a remedy.

All parties appear to be highly motivated to complete fast action in the DEH area, said Michael Work of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. "I believe this is due to the fact that everyone wants the Park Service to realize the plans for Crissy Field as soon as possible and due to the ability for all of us to take a discrete, more manageable portion of PSF (Presidio of San Francisco) to a Record of Decision."

Work said a DEH action document — whether for removal or remediation of contaminants — "has a high potential to help resolve some of the difficult issues which have yet to be resolved in the Main Installation Remedial Investigation."

Work noted that participants were able to circumvent the fractious issue of whether drinking water standards should be applied to groundwater clean-ups — a standard strongly opposed by the Army at Crissy Field. Task force members said the issue was neatly side-stepped because state law has more stringent regulations for water quality to protect both aquifers and San Francisco Bay than federal drinking water regulations.

Currently there are no plans to use groundwater at Crissy Field for drinking, however, all parties are sensitive to water quality issues because of drainage into the bay and the proposed establishment of a 20-acre wetland at Crissy Field.

"Before this effort, discussions rarely made it past the more theoretical levels," Work said. "We are now talking about potential numbers for specific contaminants for ecological and groundwater protectiveness. With this action, I am hoping that we have developed methods to either resolve these issues or set them aside by recognizing that some issues become moot under a full analysis."

Members of the working group credit National Park Service staffer, Brian Ullensvang, for coming forward with a series of hypothetical models of what remediation action is appropriate at each site and then developing a working document for the DEH task force to evaluate and revise. By having early partici-

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pation in the document by all parties, the opportunity for last minute conflict has been minimized.

A streamlined evaluation of the potential human health and ecological risks was done to support an analysis of alternatives for the DEH area. Alternatives considered for each site ranged from taking no action — walking away from the problem, to the most aggressive remediation, excavation and offsite disposal of contaminated soil, including contaminated soil found below the water table followed by pumping and removing contaminated groundwater until acceptable clean-up levels were attained.

All alternatives had to be considered in conjunction with criteria, required by the National Contingency Plan for the Superfund Law. These included: the short and long-term protection of human health and the environment; compliance with applicable laws and regulations; risk to the community and workers during the clean-up; cost; state acceptance and finally, community acceptance.

In trying to bring closure to certain clean-up issues "there was a recognition that there's a temptation to ask for more data," said RAB facilitator Doug Kern. Noting a general commitment to streamlining the process, he said, "Nothing is being

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asked for in the way of additional characterization, but we've asked for additional confirmation sampling to make sure they've gotten' all the contaminants."

"It's important to let redevelopment go ahead," said Ullensvang. "The DEH is one of the least complex areas in the Presidio. The problems are easier to resolve there than in other places."

Although the final plan was not complete as we went to press, a public hearing has been scheduled for the plan on Oct. 8 at the monthly meeting of the Restoration Advisory Board. The RAB meeting, which is open to the public, is expected to be held at the Presidio Officers Club, 50 Moraga Way on the Presidio, from 7-10 p.m. Future plans for the DEH area include planting a two-acre

Monterey Cypress grove at the Marina entrance to Crissy Field, the restoration of dunes and expanded beach with the removal of in-fill rubble and the establishment of a staging area for windsurfers and picnickers with turf parking.

Nancy Hornor, NPS project manager for Crissy Field, estimates that if the Crissy Field plan is approved this fall by the Park Service, an additional year must be spent in design and document presentation, followed by a year in construction. Hornor said an estimated \$12 million to \$14 million is expected to be raised from the private sector for the Crissy Field restoration. ■



# Petroleum Contamination at the Presidio

by Harold Ball

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Soil and groundwater contamination from petroleum hydrocarbons is perhaps the most widespread and easily identifiable environmental pollution problem at the Presidio. The sources of this contamination include fuel (heating) oil leaks from storage tanks and a former basewide fuel distribution piping system (FDS) as well as gasoline and diesel leaks from storage tanks and piping at Presidio motor pools or gas stations. Investigation of these sites is largely complete and cleanup activities have begun under the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Underground Storage Tank Program. Remediation of this contamination is a priority due to the hazard that some constituents of petroleum pose to human health and the environment.

In May 1996, the California Regional Water Quality Control Board adopted Site Cleanup Requirements for petroleum-contaminated soils that included soil cleanup levels based on protection of human health, ecological receptors (plants and wildlife), and water quality. These cleanup levels were based on a report issued by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) entitled "Fuel Product Action Level Development Report." The FPALDR proposed a risk-based approach to setting cleanup levels in which contaminants are allowed to remain in place where there is little risk of human contact (e.g. more than ten feet below ground surface) and where there is little risk of groundwater impact (e.g. more than five feet above the groundwater table). More restrictive limits were adopted for near-surface soils and soils close to the groundwater table. The cleanup levels adopted by the Regional Board in the requirements apply only to soils containing solely petroleum-based contamination and do not apply to sites where petroleum has contaminated groundwater.

Since 1990, the USACE has been working on the removal and cleanup of the approximately 300 underground and aboveground storage tanks, and 27,000 feet of fuel pipeline. The removal of the fuel distribution system is probably the most visible cleanup activity to the general public as it has required many Presidio streets to be dug up along the pipeline routes. The Army is in the process of removing the entire piping system and contaminated soils with the exception of about 2,000 feet of pipeline that cannot be removed without causing structural damage to existing facilities (for these situations, the pipeline segment would be abandoned in place). Similarly, abandoned aboveground and underground tanks and associated soil contamination are being removed. A priority of the RAB has been ensuring that no facilities are overlooked in this effort. To that end, community member Mark Youngkin carried out a thorough record search of the Presidio archives and found several tanks and pipelines that were not included in the original investigation. The RAB is working with the Army to expand the Underground Storage Tank Program to include these additional sites.

The Presidio site with the most significant petroleum contamination of groundwater is a former base motor pool and fueling station on Crissy Field, known as Building 637. At one time this site contained six aboveground gasoline and diesel tanks and pipelines serving five gas station pumping islands. Leaks from this system resulted in a contaminated groundwater plume with current dimensions approximately 700 feet by 400 feet under Old Mason Street. The tanks and pipelines were all removed some time ago. This past fall, an action was carried out to remove additional soils that were considered to be the source of the groundwater contamination, those soils containing pure gasoline and diesel, so-called "free-product."

In May 1995, the Army issued a draft final CAP in which the proposed remediation alternative included groundwater extraction and biosparge well technologies to address the heart of the plume with natural attenuation (biological degradation of the petroleum constituents) expected to clean up the contamination in the rest of the plume. At this time, however, the Army is reassessing the action plan proposal in light of recent guidance from the California State Water Resources Control Board that natural attenuation alternatives should receive increased consideration at petroleum contamination sites.

Natural attenuation or intrinsic bioremediation of hydrocarbon contamination is a very controversial issue right now. Intrinsic bioremediation has been described as everything from a treatment panacea to gross negligence. In my

opinion, the truth lies between these extreme views. Before an intrinsic bioremediation alternative was adopted there would have to be significant initial assessment to ensure that natural attenuation processes would successfully destroy contaminants of concern and show that the rates of remediation are reasonable. The RAB will be involved as this issue is considered further.

It is not clear how a delay in the 637 site cleanup decision will affect the Park Service Crissy Field Plan. Fortunately, groundwater modeling indicates that contaminated groundwater from the 637 site does not flow toward the proposed Crissy Field wetland. The Army has put a great deal of effort into evaluating this site and all of the members of the RAB have spent quite a bit of time reviewing its work. Ultimately, it appears that the timing of Park Service reuse plans for the area may drive a decision at the 637 site.

In summary, while the investigation of petroleum contaminated sites at the Presidio is largely complete, there are several newly discovered sites where additional investigation is required. While cleanup of the pipeline system and many of the storage tank sites is proceeding, decisions about future cleanup at some key sites at the Presidio have yet to be made. Do not hesitate to contact me or other members of RAB if you have questions or input to be considered as we tackle these problems. ■



## **A Look Back, A Look Ahead: A Community RAB Member's Perspective on 1996**

by Doug Kern

The RAB began 1996 by commenting on the revised Presidio Remedial Investigation report on soil and groundwater contamination. The comments reflected many of the concerns previously shared by state and federal regulators.

**Current Status:** A newly revised Remedial Investigation report is due in January 1997.

RAB members examined lead contamination at the Presidio. Contamination sources included spent lead bullets at former firing ranges, lead paint flaking from buildings and bridge exteriors and lead from auto repair operations. Attempts were made to distinguish among naturally occurring lead levels, widespread lead contamination from human activities such as auto exhaust and serious lead contamination.

**Current Status:** Lead and other heavy metals in the environment remain a significant topic of discussion.

In January, we learned there would be a reassessment of the Building 637 Corrective Action Plan. The plan proposed cleanup remedies for a former base motor pool and refueling station at Crissy Field where large fuel leaks had occurred. The Army reassessment gave increased consideration to "natural attenuation" (biological degradation of petroleum constituents) to clean up petroleum contamination. Board members with expertise in this field were able to educate the RAB on the pros and cons of such an approach.

**Current Status:** Building 637 is still being studied

In February, RAB members recommended additional groundwater testing around the two landfills located above El Polin Spring. The study brought a heightened awareness to community members about the impacts of landfills in the Tennessee Hollow watershed and their ultimate disposition in future restoration efforts.

**Current Status:** RAB members are studying the Tennessee Hollow watershed as a model for resource protection and conservation within the urban setting.

From March through May RAB members provided comments on the Regional Water Quality Control Board's Presidio Site Cleanup Requirements for petroleum contaminated soil

**Current Status:** Soil cleanup continues on the Fuel Distribution System.

In late spring a working group of Army and government agency representatives was formed to develop an expedited cleanup plan at the former Directorate of Engineering and Housing (DEH) at the east end of Crissy Field. RAB members participated in many of the meetings, bringing a community perspective to the process. Most participants and observers consider the final product a positive collaboration among the National Park Service, regulators, the Army and the public.

**Current Status:** The working group will soon release for public comment the Remedial Action Plan for DEH. Cleanup work could begin early in 1997.

RAB members examined newly discovered contamination at Building 207, a former gas station near Crissy Field. A RAB member did research on historical records that identified previously unreported fuel lines buried at the Commissary area.

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**Current Status:** Building 207 is being characterized to determine the extent of contamination. The Army is now aware of historical documents regarding the additional fuel lines.

In November and December, RAB members participated in a public meeting and provided comments on a proposed expedited cleanup of PCBs at two sites. The sites are near the old cavalry barracks and in an area between the Letterman gym and pool, future location of the Presidio YMCA.

**Current Status:** Work is expected to begin on the PCB cleanup within the next several months.

In the coming year, the RAB will comment on the Presidio Feasibility Study, the document describing contamination site cleanup alternatives. We look forward to adding several new members in 1997.

*Doug Kern has been a member of the RAB since its inception in 1994. He is the board's meeting facilitator and is a member of several RAB committees.*



# Presidio Landfills

by Doug Kern

## Presidio of San Francisco Environmental Newsletter

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Walk along the Presidio trails in the central section of Crissy Field, near the grassy shelf just north of Julius Kahn Playground, or on the coastal path overlooking the slopes above Baker Beach. You may not realize that you are passing by Army landfills. In fact, there are at least 16 fill areas of various types scattered throughout the Presidio's 1416 acres. They include five landfills from Army operations, containing building debris and various kinds of wastes; five fill sites; one graded area; and five disturbed areas described as having received debris and clean fill.

According to the Army's Final Remedial Investigation (RI) Report for the Presidio, January 1997, filling activities began before 1946 and continued until as recently as the 1980's. Historical documentation describing the contents of fill areas is not available, but investigative sampling was undertaken as part of the RI to determine the contents. Many of the landfills, fill sites, and disturbed areas are now covered by grass, shrubbery and in some cases, trees.

Four areas are found in the Tennessee Hollow Watershed (the north-south oriented valley from the area of Julius Kahn Playground in the south to Crissy Field in the north): Fill Site 1, Landfill 2, Fill Site 6, and Landfill E. The hillsides along Baker Beach contain Disturbed Areas 1, 1a, 2, 3, and 4. The western uplands of the Presidio are the location of Landfill 4, Fill Site 5, and the Transfer Station. To the south, near Lobos Creek and the former Public Health Service Hospital, are Landfill 8, Landfill 10, and Graded Area 9. Fill Site 7 is in the middle of Crissy Field.

Study of the fill areas is important because they represent potential ongoing sources of environmental contamination. Rain water may percolate through landfill material and redistribute contaminants to groundwater. Surface erosion may also spread contaminants via wind and runoff.

As part of its RI Report the Army examined the fill areas by digging test pits, drilling soil borings and wells, and analyzing samples. A selection of fill site investigations are cited below.

In Landfill 2, located 300 feet southwest of El Polin Spring, glass, charred wood and ash were found from zero to three feet deep in a test pit. From three to nine feet in depth glassware, bottles, metal strapping, ash and asbestos-wrapped pipe were identified. From nine to ten feet glassware, hospital debris, an ash zone and concrete rubble were discovered. Analytical tests indicated elevated levels of lead and DDT.

Test pits in Landfill E, located approximately 900 feet to the northwest of El Polin Spring and partly covered by the Pop Hicks baseball field, contained potential incinerator waste, melted glass and slag, and burned aerosol cans. A soil boring log showed burned bone fragments among ash and incinerator material. Military papers, oily soil smelling of petroleum, and a rubber stopper from a syringe were also found in a soil boring.

The Transfer Station in the western uplands served as the waste collection/transfer area for off-site disposal of wastes, and is described as containing artificial and debris fill materials. According to the RI, hazardous wastes and other inappropriate materials were routinely removed from Transfer Station dumpsters and temporarily stored on the site. Potential sources of contamination include leaks and spills that occurred during waste transfer operations. The RI states

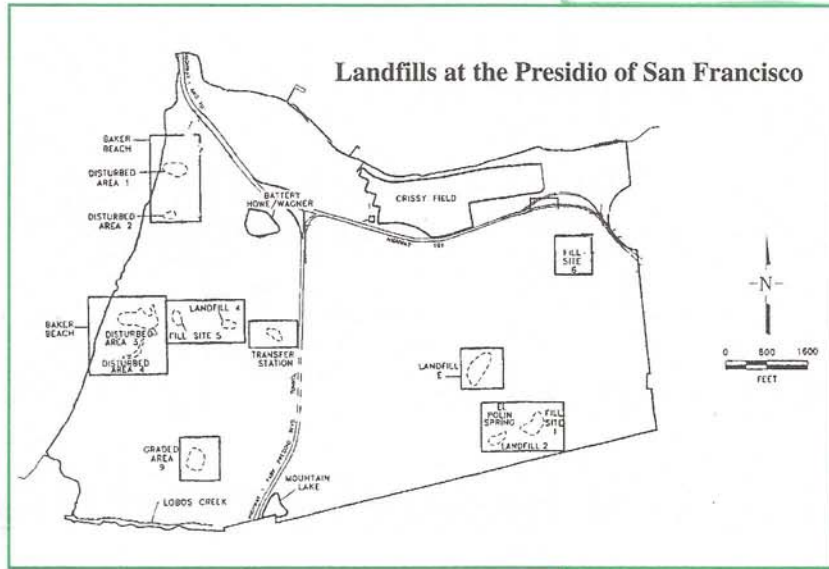
that several groups of contaminants have been released to surface soils and that concentrations generally decrease with depth.

Landfill 4 was used for on-site waste disposal as recently as 1981. Located in the middle of a eucalyptus grove in the western uplands, Landfill 4 received a great variety of wastes. According to Presidio personnel working at the time, materials dumped in Landfill 4 included chemical wastes from many Presidio facilities. In the middle of the landfill is a cluster of several large, dead eucalyptus trees. It is not known why these trees died, but Army representatives suggested at a recent RAB meeting that the cause may be bulldozer damage.

At the Baker Beach Disturbed Areas metals, PCBs, pesticides, polynuclear aromatic hydrocarbons and petroleum hydrocarbons were detected. Lead was detected in soil borings at Disturbed Area 1 and in a sediment sample taken from a seep emanating from Disturbed Area 1.

The Army has concluded its investigation of Presidio contamination. In the forthcoming Feasibility Study, the Army will suggest cleanup remedies for those sites where they believe cleanup is warranted. We look forward to the report and their prescription for a clean, safe environment at the Presidio. ■

*Doug Kern has been a member of the RAB since its inception in 1994. He is the board's meeting facilitator, and a member of several RAB committees.*



*Adapted from Dames and Moore, 1996*



# The Presidio's Nike Missile Site

by Julia Cheever,

Restoration Advisory Board Community Member

**F**orty years ago, a now quiet plateau several hundred yards north of the former Public Health Service Hospital at the Presidio was the scene of round-the-clock Army vigilance in the Cold War. Contingents of about a dozen soldiers, working in shifts of 24 hours on and 24 hours off, manned a Nike Ajax missile launching site.

Intended as "the last line of defense" against potential enemy aircraft carrying nuclear bombs, the Ajax missiles were the first generation of post-World War II guided surface-to-air missiles. The 34-foot missiles had a range of 25 miles, carried conventional high explosives and could destroy a single enemy aircraft. (Nuclear warheads were not used on Ajax missiles.)

The Presidio installation was one of 12 Nike Ajax sites in the San Francisco Bay Area in the 1950s. It was in operation only from 1955 to 1963 and was deactivated after the next generation of Nike missiles, the longer-range Hercules, reduced the number of launch sites needed.

The former launch site, which was named Battery Caulfield after Lt. Col. Thomas Caulfield, is in a fenced six-acre area east of Battery Caulfield Road in the southwestern part of the Presidio. Retired Army Col. Milton B. Halsey Jr., who is the full-time volunteer site manager for the National Park Service at the only restored Nike missile site in the nation, Fort Barry in the Marin Headlands, says the Presidio site followed the standard Nike configuration and was "not distinctive."

The Presidio battery contained three large underground storage structures, which are now closed and empty but still in place. Each housed 10 missiles. Although the concrete structures are sometimes called silos, Halsey said the correct term is magazines (meaning places where ammunition is stored), because the missiles were actually fired from outside the structure. When the launch signal came (from a separate missile control site on Mount Sutro), a hydraulically operated elevator platform raised the missile to ground level for firing.

The magazines consist of a large rectangular room (42' by 63' in two of the structures and 49' by 60' in the third) with the open elevator shaft running along the width in the center. The height is 10 feet except in the elevator shaft, which extends 22.5 feet from the bottom of an elevator pit up to steel bay doors at ground level. A small asbestos-lined room at the southwest corner of each magazine was a "personnel shelter" to be used during missile firings. The site also contains two former administration and missile assembly buildings near Battery Caulfield Road.

Today, the elevator bay doors have been welded shut but have rusted through in some places. The National Park Service now stores wood chips and other green waste and debris on part of the fenced-off site, and four large plastic-covered piles of earth are being used in a treatability study by Army contractors to determine the effectiveness of biological degradation of petroleum contaminated soil.

Restoration Advisory Board Technical Review Committee members who are concerned about potential contamination and hazards at the site have been studying the Army's Remedial Investigation Report for the Presidio (RI) along with other sources of information, such as historical records and the restored magazine at Fort Barry. They have been focusing on two concerns.

One is that the rusted doors, deteriorating interiors and water in the magazines could create a safety hazard for people, particularly children, who might make their way to the site now or in future years. The second is that contaminated water in the magazines could leak out of the structures into local groundwater, which is in the Lobos Creek drainage area.

The RI found antimony, an element used in metal alloys, in standing water inside all three magazines. RI sampling of three test wells downslope from the magazines indicated that the groundwater was not affected.

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Nevertheless, the report noted that "the communication between ground-water and water in the silos is unclear" and said the Army is considering the possibility of pumping out the water.

Recently, a concern arose that there is a potential for leakage of a second contaminant, hydraulic fluid, into the water in Magazine 1 and possibly from there to the groundwater outside. The magazines each contain a hydraulic tank located about five feet above the main floor. In March of this year, the water appeared to be 10 feet above the main floor level in Magazine 1 (the northernmost magazine), thus covering the tank and creating a potential for corrosion and leaking. The tank and related piping hold 271 gallons of hydraulic fluid, according to Halsey, who was interviewed this spring by RAB members Mark Youngkin, Doug Kern and Julia Cheever. He said similar tanks were not emptied upon deactivation of Fort Barry and several other Nike sites with which he is familiar.

RAB members studying the site have been developing suggestions that the Army consider removing the hydraulic tanks and contaminated water, conducting further groundwater sampling, and demolishing or filling the magazines to make the area safer for future recreational re-use. At press time for this article, they were preparing the recommendations for submission to the Army and looking forward to discussing them after the Army has had time to review them. ■



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# A RAB Review of 1997

by Julia Cheever, Restoration Advisory Board Community Member

**R**estoration Advisory Boards, or RABs, were established in 1994 as part of a fast-track military base cleanup program called for by President Clinton in 1993. There are now about 250 RABs at present and former military installations throughout the country. At the Presidio, as at other bases, an existing Technical Review Committee was merged in 1994 into a RAB with broader citizen participation. The board has been described by the Army as a forum in which citizen representatives "review, comment and advise the Army on cleanup plans and issues at the Presidio." About two dozen "community" or citizen members meet once a month with representatives of the Army and federal, state and city regulatory agencies. RAB committees also meet each month. 1997 was a busy year for the Presidio of San Francisco RAB, with the Feasibility Study, Crissy Field and

many other important issues at the fore. Some highlights of our efforts in 1997:

**Main Installation Feasibility Study (FS):** Our review of this study, which we received in final form in June, was our biggest project for the year because the document underpins pollution cleanup decisions for much of the Presidio not already covered by existing programs. Several board and committee meetings in the spring and summer were devoted to discussions of the study.

In September, twenty-two of the twenty-three then-active RAB community members submitted written comments on the FS. A group comment letter focusing on issues discussed at board and committee meetings was signed by twenty members. Six members additionally submitted individual comments, and six contributed to reviews written by civic organizations represented on the board. All but one of the RAB member comments advocated stronger cleanup plans. Because of the importance of the study, we requested that the Army hold a special public discussion meeting at which other representatives of the public could comment to the Army and government agencies. The meeting took place on September 3<sup>rd</sup>.

*Next step:* We look forward to working with the Army and other agencies in a resolution process that selects cleanup remedies satisfactory to Presidio stakeholders.

**Mountain Lake:** The RAB Technical Review Committee held a special meeting with representatives of the Army, regulatory agencies, the National Park Service and Friends of Mountain Lake Park on January 29<sup>th</sup> to follow up on concerns expressed by members of the public at RAB board meetings in 1996. We reviewed what was known about pollution of the lake and the impact of past Army activities.

*Next step:* Although the action was not related to the Army's clean-up program, lake advocates were delighted to learn in February that \$500,000 in wetlands funds from the San Francisco International Airport was designated for restoration of Mountain Lake.

**Nike Missile Facility:** RAB members in committee studied Remedial Investigation data about contamination at the site. Three Technical Review Committee members visited the restored Nike facility at the Marin headlands in March to learn more about Nike operations and potential pollution. In April, they submitted an advisory report to the Army raising concerns about contamination of standing water in the underground missile silos and surrounding groundwater from hydraulic oil tanks, asbestos, lead paint and other chemicals in the silos.

*Next step:* The Army announced in September that it plans to drain the standing water from the silos, remove the hydraulic oil tanks and steam clean the walls of the underground structures sometime in the spring of 1998.

**Landfill Closure Resolution:** After discussing and refining the resolution at two committee meetings and two board meetings, RAB community members passed a Landfill Closure Resolution by a 17-2 vote on May 13. The measure calls for removal of contamination, where feasible, at the former Army landfill, fill and debris sites at the Presidio. A copy of the resolution was included with the RAB group comments on the FS in September.

*Next step:* Because most of the Presidio's landfills are included in the Main Installation, we expect to continue considering the issue during the development of the Remedial Action Plan (RAP) in the spring of 1998.

**Crissy Field:** The fast-track remediation plan for Crissy Field was discussed at several board and committee meetings during the summer and fall. Two RAB representatives participated in some of the working group meetings at which the Crissy Field RAP was developed and revised. These representatives sought to keep other RAB members informed.

*Next step:* RAB members expect to review the revised plan during the new comment period running from December 23, 1997 to January 21, 1998.

**Lead, Coast Guard and other issues:** Individual RAB members submitted comments to the Army and/or requested RAB agenda discussions dur-

*Continued on page 5*

## A RAB Review

*Continued from page 4*

ing the year on variety of topics such as pollution from lead-based paint at non-residential buildings; remediation of the Coast Guard site at Crissy Field; and sites where more investigation of potential contamination appeared to be needed (such as Battery McKinnon-Stotsenberg).

**Site visits:** RAB members made two field visits in 1997. In March, we walked through the Building 900s area at Crissy Field and several landfill areas. In November, we visited the several "disturbed area" landfills in the cliffs along Baker Beach. Representatives of the National Park Service explained concerns about hazards to native plants and plant restoration workers while International Technology Corporation (IT) representatives described concerns about the logistics of removing the contamination.

**New members:** The RAB added six new community members after the Selection Committee screened applications and presented recommendations to the full RAB for approval. We hope to add more new members in 1998. ■



# RAB Report: Update on Community Member Activities

by Julia Cheever  
Restoration Advisory Board Community Member

**A**s the spring and early summer of 1998 brought seasonal springs, wildflower blooms and the start of Crissy Field remediation to the Presidio, the Restoration Advisory Board continued our usual meetings to discuss contamination cleanup.

Our volunteer "community" or citizen members of the RAB meet with representatives of the Army and government agencies at 7:00 PM the second Tuesday of each month at the Golden Gate Club in the Presidio. We also hold a more informal committee meeting each month, with additional committee and subcommittee meetings scheduled as needed. Between meetings, we circulate comments, documents and drafts via e-mail, fax and mail.

Our projects for the first five months of 1998 include:

## Main Installation

The soil and groundwater cleanup of the large number of sites in the Main Installation continues to be a leading concern. Last September, most RAB community members submitted comments on the Army's Feasibility Study during the public comment period. While awaiting the Army's response and proposals for a Remedial Action Plan, our Main Installation Committee in January began drafting a RAB community member list of cleanup proposals for these sites. After five drafts and discussions at several committee meetings, a letter signed by 15 RAB community members was sent to the Army and regulatory agencies on May 20. The letter discussed 23 sites and three basewide issues.

Because the Main Installation includes about a dozen landfills, fill sites and disturbed areas, we wanted to learn more about state and federal landfill closure regulations. We requested a board agenda item on this topic and at our April RAB meeting heard a presentation by a representative of the California Regional Water Quality Control Board.

## Buildings 231/207 Corrective Action Plan

Two of our members, Community Co-Chair Mark Youngkin and Doug Kern, have represented the RAB at numerous meetings with the Army and regulators on a computerized decision-making process for these two petroleum-contaminated sites. They have reported on the process and sought suggestions on cleanup priorities from other RAB members at committee meetings.

## TAPP Program

A Main Installation subcommittee led by community member Janet Monaghan is looking into several possible projects that might be eligible for the Army's Technical Assistance for Public Participation (TAPP) program, which was described to us at our March RAB meeting. One project under consideration is a review of technologies for recycling landfill contents. A consultant in this field talked to us at our May committee meeting.

## Radiology Research

A subcommittee is currently doing research on any studies that may have been conducted on the possibility of radiological contamination at landfills and the Nike missile facility. Some community members became concerned that radium dials used at the Nike site could be a source of contamination after they learned that 1) a radiological survey was conducted at a landfill and a Nike site at Fort Sheridan in Illinois and 2) radium dials contaminated landfills at former military bases at Hunters Point and in Alameda.

## Lead-based Paint

Community members remain concerned about the apparent impasse between the U.S. Department of Defense and the Environmental Protection Agency on whether the Army is responsible for investigating and alleviating soil contamination from lead-based paint at non-residential buildings. We are currently circulating a draft of a proposed community member letter expressing the view that action is needed because of the potential health risk.

## Ohlone People

Community members are seeking to educate ourselves about the history of the Ohlone people and archaeological issues at the Presidio. We heard a presentation by The Cultural Conservancy about Ohlone burial sites at our April RAB meeting and a description by the National Park Service of its archaeological program at our May committee meeting.

## New Members

We were pleased to add seven new community members to the board in April. They were voted in by the full community board after our Selection Committee, chaired by LeeAnn Lahren, screened applications and recommended a slate.■

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# RAB Article: Presidio Riparian Corridor Restoration

By: Doug Kern, Restoration Advisory Board Member

**S**ince December 1997, community members of the Presidio Restoration Advisory Board (RAB) have been working with Army representatives to develop cleanup strategies at two former Presidio gas stations, known collectively as Building 207/231 located just adjacent to Crissy Field. Gasoline and diesel fuel products have contaminated soil and groundwater at these sites and unfortunately, polluted an area designated for riparian corridor restoration in National Park Service's General Management Plan for the Presidio. What is the Army considering for cleanup and how is community participation ensuring a successful stream restoration process?

First, what is a "riparian" corridor? According to the American Heritage Dictionary "riparian" means "of, on, or relating to the banks of a natural course of water." In our case, the term "riparian corridor" means the swath of habitat stretching along the banks of a stream. The Tennessee Hollow Riparian Corridor begins alongside three distinct tributaries in the southern Presidio with the central tributary beginning just north of the Julius Kahn playground. Historically, these tributaries joined at a point just south of the current YMCA building and extended north to Crissy Field as a single stream. Today water flows mostly in underground storm drains directly to offshore outfalls in the Bay. Once the riparian corridor restoration is under way, however, a new stream channel will be created and the water brought up from underground to the light of day at the point where it empties into the Crissy Field wetlands. This "daylighting" process will occur near the intersection of Halleck and Mason Streets, precisely where the Building 207/231 contamination is located.

In general, hydrocarbons left in soil and groundwater under and adjacent to a stream will migrate into that stream, contaminating surface water and possibly harming plants and wildlife. A variety of strategies are being considered at the Building 207/231 sites to protect the future riparian corridor restoration and the Crissy Field Wetlands. The cleanup processes under examination include digging up the soil and hauling it away, extracting hydrocarbon vapors under a vacuum through pipes inserted into the contamination, and adding oxygen to soil and groundwater to enhance the breakdown of hydrocarbons by naturally occurring bacteria. All the processes have advantages and disadvantages. Presidio stakeholders are also looking at combinations of these approaches to allow timely cleanup of contamination and protection of natural resources while being efficient with financial resources.

By attending working group meetings with the Army, the National Park Service and regulators from government agencies, community members of the RAB communicated the goals of the riparian corridor restoration. We offered concepts for how such a stream might look and the type of habitat we wanted to see established in the area. We identified criteria to evaluate cleanup alternatives and raised issues we believed would be important to the experience of future Presidio visitors. While consensus on a final cleanup strategy was not reached within the working group, community members continue to monitor and assess cleanup planning and actions at the site.

After many months of technical meetings RAB community members are anticipating the Army's release of the Building 207/231 Draft Corrective Action Plan later this year. This document will spell out the Army's cleanup plans for soil and groundwater contamination along a natural stream channel and riparian habitat. RAB community members believe a carefully conceived and directed cleanup effort will leave an unpolluted environment where a historic stream will flow once again in a restored riparian corridor. ■

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# Presidio CleanUp News

*A Quarterly Publication  
of the Presidio Trust*

*Winter 2000*



The Presidio Trust (Trust) is the federal executive agency created by Congress in 1996 to be the guardian of the natural, scenic, recreational and cultural resources of the Presidio of San Francisco in partnership with the National Park Service.

## **Presidio CleanUp News**

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Pages 1, 3 and 4



*Soil impacted by petroleum products was excavated from the Building 637 Site and disposed of at an off-site facility.*

## **Building 637 Petroleum Contamination Cleanup**

By Doug Kern, RAB Community Member

Building 637 is the site of a former Army motor pool gas station at Crissy Field in use from the 1920s until 1989. The area is located west of the midway point along Crissy Field and set against the bluff running parallel to the shoreline. Part of the area lies on a section of the historic airfield and the realigned Mason Street. The now-demolished station contained five fueling islands, underground piping, and six above-ground storage tanks, including three 20,000-gallon gasoline tanks and three 5,000-gallon diesel fuel tanks.

*Bldg. 637 - Continued on page 3*

## **What is the Presidio Restoration Advisory Board?**

The Presidio Restoration Advisory Board (RAB) was formed in 1994 as part of the Department of Defense BRAC (Base Realignment and Closure) program. The RAB, composed of community members, regulatory agency officials, and Presidio Trust and National Park Service environmental program managers, is the main forum for communication and information exchange about environmental cleanup at the Presidio. The RAB community members come from different backgrounds and represent diverse interests such as those of neighborhood associations, environmental groups, and local business associations. Although the RAB does not make the actual cleanup decisions, RAB members provide valuable information, suggestions, and advice that help direct the cleanup so that it will be consistent with community priorities and interests.

The Presidio RAB is currently composed of 23 community members and 9 regulatory agency members. The regulatory agencies represented include the California Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC), the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and the Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB). The RAB meets on the second Tuesday of every month at 7:00 p.m. at the Golden Gate Club on the Presidio. The meetings are open to the public, and the RAB encourages anyone interested in the program to attend.

## **RAB Update: A Review of 1999 and Look Ahead at 2000**

By Julia Cheever, RAB Community Member

The Presidio RAB is expecting a busy year in 2000 as the Presidio Trust embarks on an expedited cleanup of the remaining contamination in the park. RAB community members look forward to working with the Trust and the National Park Service in this next phase of abatement.

The spring of 2000 will mark the sixth anniversary of the RAB. During our first five years, we served in our role as citizens' forum while the Army carried out a number of important cleanup projects. These included, among others,

removal of underground fuel pipelines and storage tanks; abatement of imminently hazardous asbestos and lead-based paint; development of a fast-track cleanup plan for Crissy Field; and preparation of the Main Installation Remedial Investigation and drafts of the Feasibility Study.

1999 was a bridge year for the RAB as the lead agency status was transferred from the Army to the Trust. Our 1999 activities included:

- ♦ Final RAB meetings with the Army. At our final board meetings with the Army in January through April of 1999, we heard updates on the cleanup of Crissy Field, discussed a study of hexavalent chromium at the Presidio and learned about the removal of petroleum-contaminated soil discovered at the Golf Course.
- ♦ Army/Trust transition. Representatives of the Army, the Trust and the National Park Services met with RAB community members at three special meetings in April to discuss the Memorandum of Agreement transferring cleanup responsibility to the Trust. The first official RAB meeting under the leadership of the Trust was held in July.
- ♦ Building 637 Working Group. As described in the article in this newsletter by Doug Kern, several RAB community members joined representatives of the Trust and the National Park Service during the summer in a working group to develop a remediation plan for Building 637, the petroleum-contaminated former gas station at Crissy Field.
- ♦ RAB Charter and Bylaws revision. The RAB adopted its original Charter and Bylaws in 1994. Last spring, community members concluded that the document needed to be revised to reflect the change in the lead agency status from the Army to the Trust and to make other minor improvements. As provided by the existing charter, the RAB Rules Committee was assigned to prepare the proposed revisions. The six-member committee met five times between July and November and circulated drafts to the RAB and the Trust for comments. The committee presented a final draft to the RAB at the December meeting; a discussion and vote were scheduled for the January 2000 RAB meeting.

*RAB - Continued on Page 3*



## *Bldg. 637 - Continued from Page 1*

Over many years several leaks of gasoline and diesel fuel occurred, contaminating soil and groundwater at the site. RAB members evaluated Army cleanup plans during 1994-95, and their comments were incorporated into the Army's Draft Final Corrective Action Plan (CAP) submitted in May 1995.

The Army delayed submittal of the CAP to the Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB), however, and instead asked the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory (LLNL) to conduct a study on natural attenuation, a process that allows petroleum hydrocarbons to degrade without active treatment. While generally less expensive than active cleanup measures, the process can still incur significant monitoring costs. After nearly three years the LLNL study was released, recommending natural attenuation at the Building 637 site. Despite the probability of a long cleanup time frame (as much as 70 to 100 years), in April 1999 the Army released a Revised Final Draft CAP recommending some excavation of contaminated soil, natural attenuation for contaminated groundwater and long-term monitoring of groundwater.

In May 1999, the Presidio Trust took over cleanup responsibility for the Presidio. With the Crissy Field restoration proceeding rapidly, the Building 637 site became an immediate priority site for the Trust. A working group of RAB members, Presidio Trust and National Park Service representatives was formed to craft a cleanup remedy that would protect the Crissy Field marsh from chronic low-level petroleum contamination and allow construction activities to proceed.

Meetings continued through June and July, and the result was a Final CAP for Building 637. The plan called for excavation of contaminated soil within four feet of the surface and enhanced bioremediation, of groundwater. Because the source contamination would be directly addressed through enhanced bioremediation the new plan required less long-term monitoring. The final remedy thus provided a faster and more active cleanup and was less costly than the Army's previous plan. The RWQCB approved the CAP in August, and work began immediately.

While the working group process was not perfect, RAB community members had several opportunities to partici-

pate meaningfully in the decision-making process. RAB community members within the working group participated in a joint technical presentation with the Trust and National Park Service to the full RAB and the public at the July RAB meeting. The final CAP incorporated comments and opinions expressed by the public.

In September 1999, RAB community members unanimously passed a resolution in support of the Building 637 CAP process. The RAB found the public participation approach conducted by the Presidio Trust to be "on track" and expressed its desire to continue the working group procedure allowing RAB input early in the cleanup planning process.

Cleanup of contaminated soil at Building 637 was completed in October, and the groundwater cleanup is scheduled to begin next spring. As part of the Crissy Field restoration, construction of the Mason Street realignment through formerly contaminated soil at the site was completed in early December 1999.

## *RAB - Continued from Page 2*

- ♦ **Feasibility Study Working Groups.** We expect that our biggest task in 2000 will be participating in the development and review of the revised Main Installation Feasibility Study and Remedial Action Plan scheduled for completion by the Trust on an expedited basis this spring and summer. The Main Installation encompasses several dozen sites, including 15 landfills and fill sites scattered throughout the park. RAB community members last participated in reviewing these sites when we, along with other members of the public, submitted comments on the Army's Draft Final Feasibility Study in September 1997. In anticipation of the intense pace expected for revision of the study, RAB community members in November established four working groups based on four geographic areas of the Presidio. Each area contains between six and 14 possible cleanup sites. The groups held initial meetings in November and December 1999 to discuss the sites in each area.

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## RAB Report

By Restoration Advisory Board Community Members

The Presidio Restoration Advisory Board was formed in 1994 as a citizens' forum to advise the Army on the environmental cleanup of the base. After the Presidio Trust took over the remediation effort in 1999, the RAB continued to serve the same function with the Trust.

Our 20 or more "community" or citizen members meet once a month at an evening board meeting with representatives of the Trust, the National Park Service and state regulatory agencies. The meetings are open to the public and we encourage people who are interested in the cleanup to attend. The meetings take place at 7 p.m. on the second Tuesday of the month at the Golden Gate Club at the Presidio. In addition to attending the board meetings, we review documents, meet in committees and convey information to and from neighborhood and community groups.

We are currently seeking several new members and welcome applications. If you would like an application or more information, please contact community relations specialist Jane Packer at the Presidio Trust at (415) 561-4255 or [jpacker@presidiotrust.gov](mailto:jpacker@presidiotrust.gov)

## RAB Update

By Julia Cheever, RAB Community Member

Last year, RAB community members concentrated most of our efforts on the Main Installation Feasibility Study now being revised by the Trust. As is described elsewhere in this newsletter, this important study encompasses several dozen sites scattered throughout the park, including about 14 landfills and fill sites, and is the largest single cleanup project remaining at the Presidio.

## Working Groups

To prepare for our review of the Feasibility Study, we formed four working groups in the fall of 1999. Each group reviewed the available information about sites in a different geographic area of the Presidio. The groups reported on their reviews at our board meeting in March of last year.



## Committee Meetings

Later in the spring, we began informal discussions with Trust, Park Service and state agency staff on a number of general Feasibility Study topics during our monthly committee meetings. Among other subjects, we talked about the selection of cleanup levels for various chemicals, technologies for removing contamination, and areas needing additional sampling.

In the fall, the discussions moved to the specific proposals then being drafted by the Trust for cleaning up soil and groundwater pollution at individual sites. We first identified which sites needed less discussion because there appeared to be a consensus on the proposed solutions and which needed more discussion. RAB community members and the Trust staff held extra sessions on the most complicated sites and met nearly every week in October and November.

Updates on the site proposals were also presented at our regular board meetings. By this spring, a consensus was reached on the proposed remedies for most sites.

## Site visits

RAB community members were invited by Trust staff to observe on-site activities at several smaller ongoing cleanup projects. We were able to observe work on the removal of petroleum residue at a former fueling station at Crissy Field; the investigation of a seep with traces of gasoline near the Commissary; and the trenching of Landfill 6 near the former Letterman Hospital to take soil samples.

## Membership

The RAB added five new members last September and is now seeking several new members to fill vacancies. Community members would like to extend thanks for three longtime members who recently left the board after serving since its founding in 1994: Andrew Lolli, Bruce McKleroy, and Joan Girardot.

## 2001, A Restoration Advisory Board Odyssey

By Doug Kern, RAB Community member

In April 2001, the Presidio Restoration Advisory Board began its eighth year of community service monitoring the cleanup of the Presidio from former Army opera-

tions. Over the years we've had our share of challenges and progress. Board members have volunteered hundreds of hours reviewing technical documents, attending meetings and advocating solutions for contaminated soil and groundwater at petroleum sites, Crissy Field and the Main Installation. When the opportunity arose, we supported the Presidio Trust's skillful negotiations with the Department of Defense to assume the Army's cleanup responsibilities. When the Trust became the lead agency in the cleanup, we continued to work closely with staff to seek the best solutions possible for the Presidio.

Solutions for many Presidio cleanup sites are close at hand. The cleanup process calls for consideration of a variety of criteria when selecting remedies and we've been paying close attention to all of these, including the final cost. As we go to press, just a handful of sites remain under scrutiny by the RAB, specifically some of the larger landfill sites. We expect that the continuing discussions with the Trust will produce the long-term, lasting remedies for these remaining sites that the Presidio as a national park demands.

When the decision document is released to the larger public, we encourage citizens to attend our public meetings and discuss with your fellow community members the various pros and cons of the remedies under consideration. Community RAB members bring a breadth of experience to the table and will be pleased to discuss how proposals were considered. We will welcome your input.

As the cleanup moves from discussion to action over the next year, the RAB will shift to a new phase of our work, dealing with the sometimes complex details of implementation and follow-through with the final remedies. We expect that there will be construction activities at the Presidio to remove contamination for the next several years and we want to ensure that these activities are conducted with minimal impact to visitors and residents alike.

As we look at the proposed cleanup schedule, it appears that our odyssey is only about halfway to a complete Presidio cleanup. Over the next five to seven years, the Presidio will reap the rewards of careful community deliberation with the responsible agencies. We look forward to the day when we can proudly say the job is finally done.



# RAB Report

By Restoration Advisory Board Community Members



Our RAB Report for  
this newsletter has

two articles:

- an update on recent  
RAB activities;
- an article about  
one of our working  
groups

*The Presidio Restoration Advisory Board, or RAB, is an advisory panel and citizens' forum for discussion and review of environmental cleanup plans for the Presidio. The RAB was formed by the Army in 1994 under the Defense Environmental Restoration Program. After The Presidio Trust took over the remediation effort in 1999, the RAB continued to serve the same function with the Trust.*

*The RAB is made up of 20 or more community or citizen members and government agency representative entities concerned with the cleanup – The Presidio Trust, the National Park Service and state and federal regulatory agencies. The community and agency members meet, along with Trust environmental staff members, in a public meeting once a month. Members of the public are welcome to attend the meetings, which take place at 7 p.m. on the second Tuesday of each month at the Officers' Club at the Presidio.*

*If you would like more information about the cleanup or the RAB or want a membership application, please contact community relations specialist Jane Packer at The Presidio Trust at (415) 561-4255 or [jpacker@presidiotrust.gov](mailto:jpacker@presidiotrust.gov).*

## RAB Update

by Julia Cheever, RAB Community Member

**Meetings.** Discussions at our board and committee meetings continued to focus on topics in the Main Installation Feasibility Study now being revised by The Presidio Trust. This important document, scheduled for release in 2002, will propose cleanup plans for about a dozen landfills and a number of other sites around the park.

We received several detailed presentations by Trust staff on the plan to excavate contaminated soil at Landfill 4 and Fill Site 5. Community members support the proposals and applaud the plan to start on an interim remedial action at these sites while the full Feasibility Study is being completed. We also discussed Feasibility Study cleanup levels for contaminants, background levels of metals and additional sampling at several sites. Other programs reviewed at our meetings included ongoing projects to remove petroleum contamination, investigation of former firing ranges and remediation of Mountain Lake.

**Site Visits.** We participated in site visits to Landfill 4 and Fill Site 5 before our July 24 committee meeting and Aug. 14 board meeting. Natural resources staff members from the Trust and National Park Service were on hand to explain about tree removal, protection of sensitive plant species during the excavation at Fill Site 5, and future

restoration of native vegetation.

Community members were invited to join agency members on July 17 as they selected final closure sampling locations at the Crissy Field tidal marsh, the former site of Landfill 7. The sampling marked nearly the final step in the cleanup procedures for this site; RAB members participated over several years in the development of the 1998 cleanup plan for this area, which opened the way for the renovation of Crissy Field.

**Comments.** Individual RAB community members submitted comments to the Trust and state agencies on the additional field sampling and on background levels of metals. A proposed comment on remediation alternatives for Landfill E was being circulated among community members last fall.

**Membership.** Four new community members were unanimously voted in by RAB community members at our Oct. 9 board meeting. The RAB Membership Committee recommended the four candidates after reviewing recent applications during the summer. The new members are Willard Harris, Joel Hermann, David Sutter and Cheryl Swanson. Together, they bring experience in community service, law, public health, engineering, communications and contract management to the board. We welcome them to the RAB!



# A Glance at the Cliffs of Baker Beach

*The Presidio Trust is currently investigating options for cleaning up the Baker Beach landscape. Community members of the RAB are actively participating in the process.*

By Tracy Wright, RAB Community Member

The last time you walked along the cliffs above Baker Beach, do you remember wondering to yourself, “Why are there pieces of concrete embedded in the trail?” or “Why is there rusty debris among the native plants?” If so, you’ll be pleased to know that The Presidio Trust is currently developing and evaluating options to clean up the Baker Beach landscape, and community members of the RAB are actively participating in the process.

When the RAB Coastal Bluffs Working Group began its investigation of the Baker Beach sites in the fall of 1999, we began with a hike through the sites to get a sense of their location, extent and appearance. There are five officially recognized “disturbed areas” above Baker Beach, primarily located on the steep cliffs between Lincoln Boulevard and the beach, as far north as Battery Marcus Miller and as far south as the

dirt road to Battery Chamberlin. Some of them are difficult to pinpoint and don’t tend to catch the attention of the casual recreational user unless you walk around with special maps and know what to look for. That’s what we did, and we were surprised by

how much we saw! There are no signs posted, but the visual indicators include large chunks of concrete, charred debris scattered down the cliffside, odd-shaped construction material, and various pieces of metal.

What’s the debris doing there? We searched through Army and Presidio Trust documentation to piece the story together. Between about 1955 and 1973 the Army used several of these sites to dump excess construction material, municipal waste, and

waste from an incinerator formerly located next to Battery Boutelle. Two of the “disturbed areas” in the southern portion of the cliffs were the result of the Army’s efforts to stabilize Lincoln Boulevard – unknowingly using soil that contained traces of undesirable chemicals and metals. In total, the Army deposited about 79,000 cubic yards of waste and fill materials into the five sites.

The sites are known to contain various materials – some fairly harmless, but some toxic to humans, plants, and animals. Among the hazardous materials found along the Baker Beach cliffs are arsenic, cadmium, copper, lead, selenium, silver, zinc, dieldrin and chlordane.

In March 2000, our working group made a presentation to the RAB at the monthly board meeting on the information we had gathered about the Baker Beach sites. That summer, the Trust conducted additional soil sampling at Baker Beach Disturbed Area 3 and Disturbed Area 4 in the southern part of the cliffs to gain more data about the extent of contamination. Over the course of the last year, the Trust, in consultation with the National Park Service, state agencies and the RAB, began determining proposed remedies for the five sites. Under the proposals, the main areas of contaminated debris will be excavated and sections with little or no contamination will be left in place.

RAB community members will continue to work with The Presidio Trust as remediation plans are refined and implemented. Because the Baker Beach sites are located in “Area A,” the coastal land stewarded by the National Park Service, The Presidio Trust will make these sites a high priority for cleanup and they will be among the earliest sites to be addressed. If all goes as planned, the pristine cliffs above Baker Beach will be returned to an aesthetically pleasing landscape – safe for all forms of life – within the next several years.



*Several Baker Beach sites are scheduled to be cleaned up in 2002.*



# RAB Report

By Restoration Advisory Board Community Members

Summer 2002



## Community Members

Jerry Anderson  
Community Member

Sam Berman  
Community Member

Saul Bloom  
Arc Ecology

Edward Callanan  
Community Member

Julia Cheever  
Planning Association for  
the Richmond

Dennis Downing  
Community Member

Matthew Fottler  
Community Member

Joel Hermann  
Community Member

Julian Hultgren  
Community Member

Doug Kern  
Community Member  
(Facilitator)

Jan Monaghan  
Community Member

Peter O'Hara  
Cove Hollow Association

David Sutter  
Community Member

Tracy Wright  
Community Member

Gloria Yaros  
Community Member

Mark Youngkin  
Community Member  
(Community Co-Chair)

## Agency Members

Craig Cooper  
Presidio Trust  
(Agency Co-Chair)

Brian Ullensvang  
National Park Service

Robert Boggs  
California Department of  
Toxic Substances Control

Jim Ponton  
California Regional Water  
Quality Control Board

Michael Work  
U.S. Environmental  
Protection Agency

*The Presidio Restoration Advisory Board, or RAB, is an advisory panel and citizens' forum for discussion and review of environmental cleanup plans for the Presidio. The RAB is made up of about 20 community members as well as agency members representing the Presidio Trust, the National Park Service, and state and federal regulatory agencies. We hold a public meeting on the second Tuesday of each month at 7pm at the Officers' Club at the Presidio.*

*Our meetings in the first half of 2002 covered several ongoing topics – cleanup plans for Landfill 4 and Fill Site 5; cleanup standards; Mountain Lake; the demolition of the Letterman Army Institute of Research; remediation of the former Crissy Field skeet range; and Landfill E.*

*RAB members have been following environmental investigations of Mountain Lake and, more recently, cleanup plans for the lake, for the past several years. The following article is a report on Mountain Lake from the perspective of a community member.*

## RAB Close-Up: Mountain Lake

By Gloria Yaros  
RAB Community Member

For many San Franciscans, Mountain Lake is one of the most cherished locations in the city. Take a leisurely stroll around this delightful area and you will quickly know why. It has been, for many years, a retreat and recreation area, a bird-watcher and dog-walker haven, a place of quiet repose and a children's play area. The lake is believed to have served at one time as a fresh water source for the Ohlone, a native people who inhabited the Presidio prior to European settlement. A visitor information sign at the edge of the lake tells the dramatic story of how, in 1776, Captain Juan Bautista de Anza and Father Pedro Font led an expedition more than 900 miles from Mexico to become the first Europeans to see the area. They set up camp for two days, during which time Font wrote in his notes, "Here and near the lake there are yerba buena and so many lilies that I almost had them within my tent." With so much at stake, RAB community members are paying particular attention to the cleanup of Mountain Lake.

Mountain Lake is located along the Presidio's southern edge, bordered by the city-owned Mountain Lake Park. It is the only lake on the Presidio and is a groundwater-fed natural lake, four acres in size. Once 30 feet deep, it is now less than 10 feet deep as a result of filling and sedimentation. In addition to the groundwater inflow, the lake receives runoff from the adjacent Presidio Golf Course and Park Presidio Boulevard (Highway 1). The lake originally extended over what is now the boulevard, but 40 percent of the lake area was filled during the construction of the roadway and MacArthur Tunnel in the 1930s. The lake and its shores include open water, wetlands, and riparian woodlands that support many varieties of wildlife.



Visitors enjoy a picnic at Mountain Lake Park.

Initial tests of lake water and sediment by the Army in the early 1990s and by the Presidio Trust in 1998 and 2000 appeared to indicate there was no contamination at levels requiring cleanup. But new concerns were raised in 2000 by sediment data from a "paleoecological study" undertaken by University of California researchers to learn about pollen deposited in the sediment over hundreds of

*continued on Page ii...*



# RAB Close-Up: Mountain Lake ...continued from Page 1

*Members of the public are welcome to attend Restoration Advisory Board meetings, which take place the second Tuesday of every month at 7pm at the Officers' Club at the Presidio.*

years. The results suggested that the sediment contained higher levels of lead and other metals than previously thought.

The Trust conducted more extensive sediment testing in 2001 with 15 ten-foot core samples from the bottom of the lake and three samples from the highway storm drains. These tests found lead, zinc, and several other metals above cleanup levels in the upper four feet of sediment in the west side of the lake near Highway 1 as well as in the storm drain inlets. The source of the contamination appears to be the highway runoff. Trace levels of pesticides were found at several locations; the golf course was considered a possible source.

RAB members learned that plans are underway for a remedy, which is probably going to be dredging the contaminated soil and diverting the storm drains. The remedy will be described in the Feasibility Study, the document meant to ensure the protection of human health and the environment in the Presidio. We were also informed that discussions have begun among the Trust, the

Army, the National Park Service, the California Department of Toxic Substances Control, and the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) on how to allocate responsibility for paying for the cleanup. The

potentially responsible parties are Caltrans (as the agency maintaining Highway 1), the Trust and/or the Army. The discussions are expected to be a lengthy process and dredging will not begin until the financial responsibility is determined.

Cleaning up the contamination would require dredging roughly 8,000 cubic yards of sediment from the western side of the lake. This area partly overlaps with another 11,500 cubic yards slated for dredging in the

center of the lake as part of the separate Mountain Lake Enhancement Plan, which envisions deepening the lake by four feet. When the two areas are combined, the total amount to be dredged would be about 14,000 cubic yards. At a recent RAB meeting, Presidio Trust remediation construction manager George Ford explained that the contaminated material would be disposed of at a Class 2 (regulated but non-hazardous) landfill and could not be re-used at the Presidio.

RAB agency member Brian Ullensvang of the National Park Service explained that it is important for the public to understand that there are two separate actions going forward in converting the former Army base into a national park – the cleanup and the restoration process. These actions sometimes overlap, as happened when the restoration of Mountain Lake began. Dredging was planned to deepen the lake, but when contaminants were discovered, an entirely different process – remediation – had to be set in motion.

While the timetable for the dredging is still to be determined, restoration along the shore of the lake is proceeding according to the enhancement plan created by the Trust, the National Park Service, the Golden Gate National Parks Association, and community groups, foremost among them Friends of Mountain Lake Park. Native species including willow and oak have now been planted along the northeastern shore of the lake. Also, visitor access will be improved and native trees and shrubs will be planted along the western shore to buffer the lake from the roadway.

With the concern and dedication of RAB community members, the Trust, the National Park Service, citizens' groups, and various agencies, it seems to me that we can all look forward to a very exciting, clean, beautiful Presidio for ourselves, our children, and the generations who come after us.



*National Park Service employee helps restore native vegetation alongside Mountain Lake.*



# Presidio CleanUp News

## Restoration Advisory Board

### Community Members

Jerry Anderson  
Sam Berman  
Saul Bloom  
Arc Ecology  
Jan Blum  
John Budroe  
Edward F. Callanan, Jr.  
Julia Cheever  
Planning Association for  
the Richmond  
George Dies  
Dennis Downing  
Gloria Gee  
Joel Hermann  
Julian Hultgren  
Doug Kern  
Facilitator  
Jack Luikart  
Jan Monaghan  
Suzanne Novotny  
Peter O'Hara  
Cove Hollow Association  
Sara Segal  
David Sutter  
Mary Trigiani  
Tracy Wright  
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Jim Ponton  
California Regional Water  
Quality Control Board  
Michael Work  
U.S. Environmental  
Protection Agency

### Save the Dates

The Restoration  
Advisory Board will  
meet on the following  
dates at 7:00 p.m. at  
the Officers' Club (50  
Moraga Avenue) in the  
Presidio. Members of  
the community are  
invited to attend.

- March 11, 2003
- April 8, 2003

## RAB Report

*The Presidio Restoration Advisory Board (RAB) is an advisory panel and citizens' forum for discussion and review of environmental cleanup plans for the Presidio. The RAB was formed by the Army in 1994 under the Defense Environmental Restoration Program. The RAB continued to serve the same function after the Presidio Trust took over the remediation effort in 1999.*

*The RAB is made up of about two dozen community members as well as representatives of the Presidio Trust, the National Park Service and state and federal regulatory agencies. The group meets in public session on the second Tuesday of each month at 7 p.m. at the Presidio Officers' Club.*

## Presidio Cleanup Outlook, Spring 2003

By Doug Kern  
RAB Community Member

As spring arrives, the wheels of cleanup progress are rolling at the Presidio of San Francisco. Trucks have hauled contaminated soil from two former Army dump sites to regulated facilities designed to contain these types of wastes. The Restoration Advisory Board applauds the joint efforts of the many agencies involved in the cleanup: the Presidio Trust, the National Park Service, the California Department of Toxic Substances Control, and the San Francisco Regional Water Quality Control Board, to name a few. The Presidio Trust staff and management can take pride in the cleanup of these landfills; the land will be cleansed and returned to unrestricted use for future generations to appreciate and enjoy.



**Baker Beach 3 Landfill is one of the next landfills to be removed from the park.**

The planning efforts for digging and hauling contamination are surprisingly comprehensive. Many lessons have been learned from these initial sites and we hope this experience will transfer readily to future actions. That experience will be put to the test at three additional

landfills scheduled for removal later this fall. RAB community members are anticipating continued successful cleanup at two sites located along the Coastal Bluffs and one other landfill looking north across Lincoln Boulevard from the YMCA.

The Presidio Trust will soon unveil the long-awaited Feasibility Study for some 35 contamination sites at the Presidio. While many of the sites may not require further action, this document will analyze the cleanup alternatives available where removal of contamination is necessary. This document has been in production for many years and replaces the 1997 Army proposal that was rejected by many community organizations and found wanting by government regulators. We look forward to reviewing this material and having the cleanup proceed after the necessary regulatory compliance issues are cleared.

Several longstanding investigations of contamination sites have been completed. These include several landfills where the contents were unknown. Reports are being generated, and we will have the opportunity to review the data and findings in preparation for advising on appropriate cleanup decisions.

RAB community members remain committed to recommending cleanup actions that permanently remove waste. We are also strongly focused on preserving precious and limited cleanup dollars and ensuring that resources are used effectively.

It looks to be a very intense and productive year ahead. Please join us at our 7 p.m. RAB meetings on the second Tuesday of the month at the Presidio Officers' Club to contribute your own views on the Presidio cleanup front.

## New Members

Six new members were unanimously voted in by RAB community members at our January 14 board meeting. The RAB Membership Committee recommended the candidates after reviewing more than 90 applications received during a membership drive last fall. The new members are John Budroe, George Dies, Gloria Gee, John Luikart, Suzanne Novotny, and Sara Segal. Together they

bring expertise in toxicology, finance, public health, community service, and environmental science to the board.

We welcome membership applications at any time and expect to add more new members later this year. RAB meetings are public, and all members of the public, whether RAB members or not, are invited to attend. If you would like an application, or want more information about the cleanup or the RAB, please contact Denise Fraga at (415) 561-2720 or [dfraga@presidiotrust.gov](mailto:dfraga@presidiotrust.gov).

See **CLEANUP NEWS, 5**





# Presidio CleanUp News

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Michael Work  
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Protection Agency

### Save the Dates

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- August 12, 2003
- September 12, 2003

## RAB Report

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## Working Groups Continue in 2003

By Restoration Advisory Board Community Members

One of the tasks of our citizen Restoration Advisory Board is to review Presidio environmental cleanup documents. Our main focus is currently the new Revised Feasibility Study, which is probably the most important document to be released since the Presidio Trust took over the environmental remediation program in 1999. As described in the article on p. 5 of this issue of the Post, the Feasibility Study, or FS, examines the data for contamination sites, evaluates alternative cleanup solutions, and recommends a preferred remedy.

Looking at the FS is in fact a long-term project for the RAB, because our board has been reviewing predecessor documents, including several Army Remedial Investigation studies and the Army's 1997 Feasibility Study, since the mid-1990s. In 1997, RAB members were among the more than 50 government agencies, citizens' groups, and individuals that submitted comments raising concerns about the Army's FS. The issues included concerns that the Army plan would leave too much contamination in place, and that some potentially polluted areas had received minimal or no testing.

The atmosphere surrounding the revised FS is quite different. Over the past several years, the Trust conducted

additional testing at certain sites such as Fill Site 6, north of the YMCA gym, and Mountain Lake, so that decisions could be based on adequate information. The Trust also publicly discussed proposals for the stronger remedies recommended in the current study.

Although there is no official public comment period on the revised FS, RAB members are studying the document to prepare for commenting on future Remedial Action Plans, which is the next stage in the process. The two-volume FS is very detailed and technically dense. To set about reviewing it, we re-established four working groups originally formed in 1999. Each group looks at cleanup sites in one of four geographic sectors of the Presidio: Lobos Creek, Fort Scott, Coastal Bluffs, and Tennessee Hollow.

Our review considers a wide variety of issues for each site, including the chemicals of concern and the future use of that location. The sites themselves are distinct and diverse. For example, the Lobos Creek area working group is reviewing sites that include the creek itself, Mountain Lake, and the Nike Swale. The Tennessee Hollow working group is looking at landfills located near Julius Kahn Playground.

The working groups have held special meetings joined by representatives of the Presidio Trust and the National Park Service, who were helpful in answering questions and reviewing materials in the FS. While minor concerns are still being discussed, the cleanup solutions proposed in the document seem to leave the park generally free of contamination on a permanent basis.

We expect to continue discussing these issues at RAB meetings, and invite the public to join us at our board meetings on the second Tuesday of each month.



After excavation, native plants are introduced, restoring the natural area.



Heavy equipment removes the waste and contamination from former landfill sites.